

**Testimony from Daniel Hayes, MSW, CT Citizen Action Group**

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Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

*Regarding H.B. 5257, An Act Concerning Hospital Employees and Hospital Conversions*

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I am here today to voice support from the Connecticut Citizen Action Group – CCAG – for H.B. 5257, An Act Concerning Hospital Employees and Hospital Conversions. I am the Canvass Director for CCAG. We are one of Connecticut's oldest and largest grassroots advocacy organizations, with over 25,000 members across the state and a history dating back forty years in the health and safety arena. CCAG has made the hospital conversion issue and protection of the community and workers a priority. We are deeply concerned about allowing for-profits hospitals to have any sizable presence in our state, and believe public hospitals should remain nonprofit, such as is the policy in New York. It is critical that legislation such as H.B. 5257 be a precondition for any legislative support of for-profits, especially given the troubling record of potential buyers like Tenet Corporation.

Currently, I am coordinating a campaign to mobilize community support in Waterbury around protecting "community benefits," which we define as including worker protections as well as protections for the community at large -- should there even be a for-profit takeover of Waterbury Hospital. We have talked to hundreds of residents, and there is intense interest in the issue. People really care about what happens to their local hospital and maintaining access to quality care. And as this bill includes, they want to protect good jobs, pensions, benefits and working conditions as a critical part of keeping up quality care and ensuring financial security for area families. Community hospitals like those that Tenet is bidding to purchase are the largest or among the largest area employers. It is impressive how even the most apolitical and apathetic residents are willing to take action once we discuss this issue with them. We are surprised at how people tell us that they, a friend or a family member works there.

Residents also talk to us about why they care. They themselves or someone they love has needed hospital services, so they deeply understand the importance of good jobs and staffing. People are hugely skeptical about allowing for-profit conversions at all –

and they give us examples of how for-profit health care forgets to put people before profits. Voters in the districts want accountability. No one wants an out of state, multi-billion dollar corporation coming in to town to depress wages, outsource jobs, make benefits unaffordable, steal the pensions that nurses and other employees have spent their whole careers earning, get tax breaks and top it off with cuts to staffing levels and services.

People want to make sure that any conversion works for the whole community, not just for the shareholders. In-light of the numerous for-profit conversions proposed statewide, I would urge you to support and pass H.B. 5257 as soon as possible so that the communities concerned, employers, and lawmakers will have clear expectations on what protections are essential. Thank you for your time.